

**AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION**

**Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 13 with the following amended paragraph:**

In a further embodiment of the present invention, an MR (12) sets up alternative handling instructions (AHI) (1010) on an SAHS (16), as can be seen in figure 2. These AHI (1010) may include, for instance, forwarding the received SMS messages to another address, deletion of the accumulated undelivered messages (due to the MR being unavailable to the network or having a full inbox on the handset) in an SMSC (14), saving particular messages in personalized folders (such as saving all messages from a superior in a folder marked “urgent”), filtering instructions about which SMS messages to accept, which to reject and what to do with them (for example, rejecting all SMS messages that are 3 days old, or all SMS messages from a particular source) etc. An SAHS (16) may also be set up as a part of an SMSC (14), or may be implemented jointly with an ARMS (18), in a common software element. According to this embodiment, once an MR (12) has set up his or her personal preferences, via a web-based provisioning interface, for example, on an SAHS (16), the SMS messaging process is executed as follows: An MS (10) sends an SMS message to an MR (12) (1020). In the cases where the MR (12) is not available, or chooses to filter incoming messages, the SMSC (14) intercepts the message and queries (1025) an SAHS (16) to determine whether there is an Alternative Handling Instruction (AHI). If there is no AHI, the SMSC (14) passes on the message directly to the MR (12). If there is one AHI, the SAHS (16) sends that AHI to the SMSC (14) (1035). If there is more than one AHI, the SMSC (14) sends the ARMS (18) the original message sent by the MS (10), and the ARMS (18) uses the message contents as a key to choose the appropriate AHI, and subsequently returns the

appropriate AHI to the SMSC (14) (1040). The service, for example, may be limited to human MS. In this example, only Mobile-Originated SMS messages may receive the auto-reply, while machine-originated SMS messages (such as voicemail notification messages) may not receive an Auto-reply. Messages are commonly identifiable by the originating phone number, which is thus utilized for filtering purposes. In this and other ways, subscribers may manage and filter SMS messages, according to pre-configured personalized alternative handling instructions. The SMSC (14) executes the AHI accordingly. Examples of such executions include customized forwarding of messages to individuals and/or groups, deleting messages, storing messages and filtering messages according to chosen criteria. The SMSC (14) may or may not send the original message to the MR (12), depending on the setup of the AHIs and/or ARMs.